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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Fifty-seventh session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1429th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 21 August 2000, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. SHERIFIS

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

ORGANIZATIONAL AND OTHER MATTERS (agenda item 2) (continued)

Report of the working group on obsolete general recommendations (CERD/C/57/Misc.40, circulated in French only)

1. Mr. de GOUTTES, speaking as convener of the working group on obsolete general recommendations, introduced its consensus report, in which the working group proposed not to withdraw from its compilation of general recommendations (CERD/C/365) those now considered obsolete, but rather to add footnotes to them - the text of which would be circulated before the end of the session - making cross-references to the subsequent general recommendations on the same topics. It also proposed expanding that same compilation to include Committee decisions of general interest, in particular the decision concerning sources of information. It further proposed revising the Committee's general guidelines (CERD/C/70/Rev.4) by updating the references to the general recommendations and by deleting the request for information on the status of relations with the racist regime of southern Africa (para. 11, sect. B under art. 3).

2. Mr. ABOUL-NASR reiterated his position that obsolete recommendations should be withdrawn, given the glut of documentation. Indeed, if the thinking of the working group were carried through to its logical conclusion, the reference to the apartheid regime should be retained as well, for historic reasons.

3. Mr. de GOUTTES explained that the reference to the racist regime in the historic general recommendation in question would not, of course, be deleted, only the request for information in the Committee's current general guidelines.

4. Mr. BANTON said that he supported the recommendations of the working group, but observed that they should be kept under continuing review, because documentation in any field could always be improved.

5. The recommendation of the working group (CERD/C/57/Misc.40) was adopted.

Draft decision proposed by the Bureau (CERD/C/57/Misc.39, circulated in English only)

6. The CHAIRMAN introduced the draft decision, in which the Committee decided to request the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to include in the Plan of Action for the Year 2000 adequate resources for use by the Committee to cover expenses for the participation of its representatives in the regional meetings to be held prior to the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

7. The CHAIRMAN said he took it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft decision, which he would then forward to the High Commissioner.

8. It was so decided.

Overdue initial report of the United States

9. The CHAIRMAN recalled that, two years earlier, the previous Chairman had sent a letter to the United States Assistant Secretary of State indicating that the initial report of the United States was overdue. The United States had replied at the time of the fifty-sixth session that the United States took the work of the Committee very seriously, was engaged in drafting its initial report and would submit it at the earliest possible time; in response, the Chairman had drawn attention to the time requirement under article 9 of the Convention, reiterating the hope that the report would be received soon.

10. The Bureau proposed that the Chairman should now send another letter referring to the previous assurances of the United States and pointing out that the five-year rule - applicable to large and small States parties alike - would apply to the United States at the next session, at the same time expressing the earnest hope that the initial report could indeed be considered at that session, which would in all probability be held in New York. He took it that the Committee wished to endorse the Bureau's proposal.

11. It was so decided.

12. The CHAIRMAN further suggested that another letter should be sent, to the United States Ambassador in Geneva, drawing attention to the request by the Shoshone people that the Committee should consider their situation and complaints, and to the request by African-American leaders that certain issues should be considered by the Committee, both requests supplemented by extensive documentation; and indicating that the Committee wished to take up both questions during its consideration of the initial report of the United States, which it had reason to believe would be scheduled soon, probably in January in New York. He took it that the Committee wished him to send such a letter.

13. It was so decided.

Thematic discussions

14. The CHAIRMAN reported that in the opinion of the Bureau the thematic discussion on Roma had gone extremely well. The Bureau accordingly felt that it would be useful to have a similar thematic discussion on indigenous populations at the August 2001 session, unless that session was to be held in South Africa. The resulting documentation would, as in the case of the Roma discussion, constitute a Committee contribution to the World Conference against Racism, to be held that September. He would welcome informal views from members before the Bureau submitted a formal proposal on the matter.

15. Ms. McDOUGALL, referring to the Roma discussion, proposed that the Chairman should send a letter to the High Commissioner noting its success and asking her to circulate the general recommendation on Roma as an official document for the inter-sessional open-ended working group in January and the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the World Conference in May.

16. It was so decided.

17. Mr. ABOUL-NASR, endorsing the Bureau's proposal for a second thematic discussion, said that other topics as well would lend themselves to such treatment, perhaps at a later stage, such as the relationship between armed conflict or violence and racial discrimination.

18. The CHAIRMAN said that he would refer Mr. Aboul-Nasr's proposal to the Bureau. Certainly, judging from the Committee's experience with its first thematic discussion, it should continue to hold them on cross-border issues of paramount concern.

World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance

19. The CHAIRMAN, observing that the work done by the three working groups convened in connection with the World Conference now needed to be amalgamated, suggested that there should be an informal exchange of views in a working group of the whole.

20. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.